



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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ICE TURNS OVER MEXICAN NATIONAL MURDER SUSPECT TO AUTHORITIES SOUTH OF THE BORDER

EL CENTRO – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today returned a Mexican national sought for a slaying five years ago in the Mexican State of Colima to his native country. ICE transported J. Rosario Meza Cuellar, 32, to the border crossing at Calexico this morning where he was turned over to representatives from the Mexican Federal Prosecutor's Office in Mexicali.

Meza, who is a convicted felon, was ordered removed from the United States earlier this month based on a drug conviction in Santa Clara County for which he was sentenced to four years in prison.

As part of ICE's nationwide Institutional Removal Program, ICE officers working at Calipatria State Prison responded to an arrest warrant issued for Meza in Mexico. The warrant charges Meza with shooting and killing Andres Lazaro Meza. At the time of the murder, the victim was harvesting corn on a farm in Villa de Alvarez, Mexico in August 2000. Suspecting Meza might have fled to the United States, Mexican authorities had appealed to law enforcement officials here for assistance in locating him.

"ICE is working closely with our Mexican law enforcement counterparts to protect citizens of both countries from violent criminals," said Ron Smith, field office director of ICE detention and removal operations in San Diego. "These prison checks help promote public safety by ensuring that our border will not be a barrier to bringing foreign fugitives to justice."

In San Diego and Imperial Counties, ICE officers screen inmates at three California state prisons, including Calipatria and Centinela State Prisons in Imperial Valley and Donovan State Prison in San Diego. Working in the prisons, ICE officers conduct record checks and interviews to identify potentially deportable foreign-born aliens who are incarcerated. On average, ICE processes approximately 300 foreign-born inmates locally each month for repatriation to their native country.

Authorities estimate approximately 21,000 inmates in California state prisons are foreign-born. Of those, about 80 percent have been identified by ICE as immigration violators who will be turned over to ICE for removal upon their release from prison. So far this year, more than 2,670 criminals aliens have been released from the state prisons and repatriated to their native country through the San Diego ICE Institutional Removal Program. The vast majority of those aliens, approximately 2,210, were repatriated to Mexico.

ICE